THOUGHTS

UPON THE

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

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RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH.

THE SECOND EDITION.

MATT. vii. 12.

ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM: FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

HOMO SUM ——

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AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

THE nature and effects of that unhappy and diſgraceful branch of commerce, which has long been maintained on the Coaſt of Africa, with the ſole, and profeſſed deſign of purchaſing our fellow-creatures, in order to ſupply our Weſt-India iſlands and the American colonies, when they were ours, with Slaves; is now generally underſtood. So much light has been thrown upon the ſubject, by many able pens; and ſo many reſpectable perſons have already engaged to uſe their utmoſt influence, for the ſuppreſſion of a traffic, which contradicts the feelings of humanity; that it is hoped, this ſtain of our National character will ſoon be wiped out.

If I attempt, after what has been done, to throw my mite into the public ſtock of information, it is leſs from an apprehenſion that my interference is neceſſary, than from a conviction, that ſilence, at ſuch a time, and on ſuch an occaſion, would, in me, be criminal. If my teſtimony ſhould not be neceſſary, or ſerviceable, yet, perhaps, I am bound, in conſcience, to take ſhame to myſelf by a public confeſſion, which, however ſincere, comes too late to prevent, or repair, the miſery and miſchief to which I have, formerly, been acceſſary.

I hope it will always be a ſubject of humiliating reflection to me, that I was, once, an active inſtrument, in a buſineſs at which my heart now ſhudders. My headſtrong paſſions and follies plunged me, in early life, into a ſucceſſion of difficulties and hardſhips, which, at length, reduced me to ſeek a refuge among the Natives of Africa. There, for about the ſpace of eighteen months, I was in effect, though without the name, a Captive and a Slave myſelf; and was depreſſed to the loweſt degree of human wretchedneſs. Poſſibly, I ſhould not have been ſo completely miſerable, had I lived among the Natives, only, but it was my lot to reſide with white men; for at that time, ſeveral perſons of my own colour

and

and language were ſettled upon that part of the Windward coaſt, which lies between Sierra-Leon and Cape Mount; for the purpoſe of purchaſing and collecting Slaves, to ſell to the veſſels that arrived from Europe.

This is a bourn, from which few travellers return, who have once determined to venture upon a temporary reſidence there; but the good providence of God, without my expectation, and almoſt againſt my will, delivered me from thoſe ſcenes of wickedneſs and woe; and I arrived at Liverpool in May 1748. I ſoon reviſited the place of my captivity, as mate of a ſhip, and, in the year 1750, I was appointed commander, in which capacity I made three voyages to the Windward Coaſt, for Slaves.

I firſt ſaw the Coaſt of Guinea, in the year 1745, and took my laſt leave of it in 1754. It was not, intentionally, a farewel; but, through the mercy of God, it proved ſo. I fitted out for a fourth voyage, and was upon the point of ſailing, when I was arreſted by a ſudden illneſs, and I reſigned the ſhip to another Captain.

Thus I was unexpectedly freed from this diſagreeable ſervice. Diſagreeable I had long

found it; but I think I ſhould have quitted it ſooner, had I conſidered it, as I now do, to be unlawful and wrong. But I never had a ſcruple upon this head, at the time; nor was ſuch a thought once ſuggeſted to me, by any friend. What I did, I did ignorantly; conſidering it as the line of life which Divine Providence had allotted me, and having no concern, in point of conſcience, but to treat the Slaves, while under my care, with as much humanity, as a regard to my own ſafety would admit.

The experience and obſervation of nine years, would qualify me for being a competent witneſs upon this ſubject, could I ſafely truſt to the report of Memory, after an interval of more than thirty-three years. But, in the courſe of ſo long a period, the ideas of paſt ſcenes and tranſactions, grow indiſtinct; and I am aware, that what I have ſeen, and what I have only heard related, may, by this time, have become ſo inſenſibly blended together, that, in ſome caſes, it may be difficult for me, if not impoſſible, to diſtinguiſh them, with abſolute certainty. It is however, my earneſt deſire, and will therefore engage my utmoſt care, that I may offer nothing in writing, as from my own knowledge, which I could not chearfully, if requiſite, confirm upon oath.

That

That part of the African ſhore, which lies between the river Sierra-Leon, lat. 8. 30. N. and Cape Palmas, is uſually known by the name of the Windward, or Grain Coaſt. The extent (if my recollection does not fail me) is about one hundred and fifty leagues. There is a fort upon Bence Iſland, in Sierra-Leon, which formerly belonged to the old African Company: they alſo had a fort on an iſland in the river Sherbro; but the former was in private hands, and of the latter, ſcarcely the foundations were viſible, when I firſt went to Africa. There is no fort, or factory, upon this coaſt, under the ſanction of our Government; but there were, as I have ſaid, and probably ſtill are, private traders reſident at Bence Iſland, at the Bananoes, and at the Plantanes. The former of theſe is about twelve, and the latter twenty leagues, from Sierra-Leon, to the South-Eaſt.

By theſe perſons, the trade is carried on, in boats and ſhallops, thirty or forty leagues to the northward, in ſeveral rivers lying within the ſhoals of Rio Grande. But the moſt northerly place of trade, for ſhipping, is Sierra-Leon, and the buſineſs there, and in that neighbourhood, is chiefly tranſacted with the white men: but from Sherbro to Cape Palmas, directly with the

the natives. Though I have been on the Gold Coaſt, and beyond it as far as Cape Lopez, in the latitude of one or two degrees South, I profeſs no knowledge of the African trade, but as it was conducted on the Windward Coaſt, when I was concerned in it.

I am not qualified, and if I were, I ſhould think it rather unſuitable to my preſent character, as a Miniſter of the Goſpel, to conſider the African Slave Trade, merely, in a political light. This diſquiſition more properly belongs to perſons in civil life. Only thus far, my character as a Miniſter will allow, and perhaps require me, to obſerve; that the beſt Human Policy, is that, which is connected with a reverential regard to Almighty God, the Supreme Governor of the Earth. Every plan, which aims at the welfare of a nation, in defiance of his authority and laws, however apparently wiſe, will prove to be eſſentially defective, and, if perſiſted in, ruinous. The Righteous Lord loveth Righteouſneſs, and He has engaged to plead the cauſe, and vindicate the wrongs, of the oppreſſed. It is Righteouſneſs that exalteth a nation; and Wickedneſs is the preſent reproach, and will, ſooner or later, unleſs repentance intervene, prove the ruin of any people.

Perhaps what I have ſaid of myſelf, may be applicable to the nation at large. The Slave Trade was always unjuſtifiable; but inattention and intereſt prevented, for a time, the evil from being perceived. It is otherwiſe at preſent; the miſchiefs and evils, connected with it, have been, of late years, repreſented with ſuch undeniable evidence, and are now ſo generally known, that I ſuppoſe there is hardly an objection can be made, to the wiſh of thouſands, perhaps of millions, for the ſuppreſſion of this Trade, but upon the ground of political expedience.

Though I were even ſure, that a principal branch of the public revenue depended upon the African Trade, (which, I apprehend, is far from being the caſe,) if I had acceſs and influence, I ſhould think myſelf bound to ſay to Government, to Parliament, and to the Nation, "It is not "lawful to put it into the Treaſury, becauſe "it is the price of blood*."

I account an intelligent Farmer to be a good Politician, in this ſenſe; that, if he has a large heap of good corn, he will not put a ſmall quantity, that is damaged, to the reſt, for the ſake of encreaſing the heap. He knows

* Matt. xxvii. 6.

that

that ſuch an addition would ſpoil the whole. God forbid, that any ſuppoſed profit or advantage, which we can derive from the groans and agonies, and blood of the poor Africans, ſhould draw down his heavy curſe, upon all that we might, otherwiſe, honourably and comfortably poſſeſs.

For the ſake of Method, I could wiſh to conſider the African Trade,—Firſt, with regard to the effects it has upon our own people; and Secondly, as it concerns the Blacks, or, as they *are* more contemptuouſly ſtyled, the Negroe Slaves, whom we purchaſe upon the Coaſt. But theſe two topics, are ſo interwoven together, that it will not be eaſy to keep them exactly ſeparate.

1. The firſt point I ſhall mention is ſurely of political importance, if the lives of our fellow-ſubjects be ſo; and if a rapid loſs of Seamen deſerves the attention of a maritime people. This loſs, in the African Trade, is truly alarming. I admit, that many of them are cut off in their firſt voyage, and, conſequently, before they can properly rank as Seamen; though they would have been Seamen, if they had lived. But the neighbourhood of our ſea-ports is continually drained, of men and boys, to ſupply the places of thoſe who die

die abroad; and if they are not all Seamen, they are all our brethren and countrymen, ſubjects of the Britiſh Government.

The people who remain, on ſhip-board, upon the open coaſt, if not accuſtomed to the climate, are liable to the attack of an inflammatory fever, which is not often fatal, unleſs the concurrence of unfavourable circumſtances makes it ſo. When this danger is over, I think, they might, probably, be as healthy as in moſt other voyages; provided, they could be kept from ſleeping in the dews, from being much expoſed to the rain, from the intemperate uſe of ſpirits, and eſpecially from women.

But, conſidering the general diſpoſition of our Sailors, and the nature of the Slave Trade, theſe proviſos are of little more ſignificance, than if I ſhould ſay, upon another occaſion, that Great-Britain would be a happy country, *provided*, all the inhabitants were Wiſe, and Good. The Sailors *muſt be* much expoſed to the weather; eſpecially on the Windward Coaſt, where a great part of the cargo is procured by boats, which are often ſent to the diſtance of thirty or forty leagues, and are ſometimes a month before they return. Many veſſels arrive upon the coaſt, before the rainy

ſeaſon, which continues from about May to October, is over; and if trade be ſcarce, the ſhips which arrive in the fair, or dry ſeaſon, often remain till the rains return, before they can complete their purchaſe. A proper ſhelter from the weather, in an open boat, when the rain is inceſſant night and day, for weeks and months, is impracticable.

I have myſelf, in ſuch a boat, been five or ſix days together, without, as we ſay, a dry thread about me, ſleeping or waking. And during the fair ſeaſon, Tornadoes, or violent ſtorms of wind, thunder, and heavy rain, are very frequent, though they ſeldom laſt long. In fact, the boats ſeldom return, without bringing ſome of the people ill of dangerous fevers or fluxes, occaſioned either by the weather, or by unwholſome diet, ſuch as the crude fruits and palm wine, with which they are plentifully ſupplied by the natives.

Strong liquors, ſuch as brandy, rum, or Engliſh ſpirits, the Sailors cannot often procure, in ſuch quantities as to hurt them; but they will, if they can; and opportunities ſometimes offer, eſpecially to thoſe who are in the boats; for ſtrong liquor being an article much in demand, ſo that, without it, ſcarcely a ſingle Slave can be purchaſed, it is always at hand.

hand. And if what is taken from the caſks or bottles, that are for ſale, be ſupplied with water, they are as full as they were before. The Blacks who buy the liquor, are the loſers by the adulteration; but often the people, who cheat them, are the greateſt ſufferers.

The article of Women, likewiſe, contributes largely to the loſs of our Seamen. When they are on ſhore they often, from their known, thoughtleſs imprudence, involve themſelves, on this account, in quarrels with the Natives, and, if not killed upon the ſpot, are frequently poiſoned. On ſhip-board, they may be reſtrained, and in ſome ſhips they are; but ſuch reſtraint is far from being general. It depends much upon the diſpoſition, and attention, of the Captain. When I was in the trade, I knew ſeveral commanders of African ſhips, who were prudent, reſpectable men, and who maintained a proper diſcipline and regularity in their veſſels; but there were too many of a different character. In ſome ſhips, perhaps in the moſt, the licenſe allowed, in this particular, was almoſt unlimited. Moral turpitude was ſeldom conſidered, but they who took care to do the ſhip's buſineſs, might, in other reſpects, do what they pleaſed. Theſe exceſſes, if they do not induce fevers, at leaſt, render the

conſtitution leſs able to ſupport them; and lewdneſs, too frequently, terminates in death.

The riſk of inſurrections is to be added. Theſe, I believe, are always meditated; for the Men Slaves are not, eaſily, reconciled to their confinement, and treatment; and if attempted, they are ſeldom ſuppreſſed without conſiderable loſs; and ſometimes they ſucceed, to the deſtruction of a whole ſhip's company at once. Seldom a year paſſes, but we hear of one or more ſuch cataſtrophes: and we likewiſe hear, ſometimes, of Whites and Blacks involved, in one moment, in one common ruin, by the gunpowder taking fire, and blowing up the ſhip.

How far the ſeveral cauſes, I have enumerated, may reſpectively operate, I cannot ſay: the fact however is ſure, that a great number of our Seamen periſh in the Slave Trade. Few ſhips, comparatively, are either blown up, or totally cut off, but ſome are. Of the reſt, I have known ſome that have loſt half their people, and ſome a larger proportion. I am far from ſaying, that it is always, or even often, thus; but, I believe, I ſhall ſtate the matter ſufficiently low, if I ſuppoſe, that, at leaſt, one fifth part of thoſe who go from England to the Coaſt of Africa, in ſhips which trade

trade for Slaves, never return from thence. I dare not depend too much, upon my memory, as to the number of ſhips, and men, employed in the Slave Trade more than thirty years ago; nor do I know what has been the ſtate of the trade ſince; therefore I ſhall not attempt to make calculations. But, as I cannot but form ſome opinion upon the ſubject, I judge it probable, that the collective ſum of Seamen, who go, from all our ports, to Africa, within the courſe of a year, (taking Guinea in the extenſive ſenſe, from Goree or Gambia, and including the coaſt of Angola,) cannot be leſs than eight thouſand; and if, upon an average of ſhips and ſeaſons, a fifth part of theſe die, the annual loſs is fifteen hundred. I believe thoſe, who have taken pains to make more exact enquiries, will deem my ſuppoſition to be very moderate.

Thus much concerning the firſt evil, the Loſs of Seamen and Subjects, which the nation ſuſtains, by the African Slave Trade.

2. There is a ſecond, which either is, or ought to be deemed of importance, conſidered in a political light. I mean, the dreadful effects of this trade, upon the minds of thoſe who are engaged in it. There are, doubtleſs, exceptions, and I would, willingly, except myſelf.

myſelf. But, in general, I know of no method of getting money, not even that of robbery, for it, upon the highway, which has a more direct tendency to efface the moral ſenſe, to rob the heart of every gentle and humane diſpoſition, and to harden it, like ſteel, againſt all impreſſions of ſenſibility.

Uſually, about two-thirds of a cargo of Slaves are males. When a hundred and fifty or two hundred ſtout men, torn from their native land, many of whom never ſaw the ſea, much leſs a ſhip, till a ſhort ſpace before they are embarked; who have, probably, the ſame natural prejudice againſt a white man, as we have againſt a black; and who often bring with them an apprehenſion that they are bought to be eaten: I ſay, when thus circumſtanced, it is not to be expected that they will, tamely, reſign themſelves to their ſituation. It is always taken for granted, that they will attempt to gain their liberty, if poſſible. Accordingly, as we dare not truſt them, we receive them on board, from the firſt, as enemies: and before their number exceeds, perhaps, ten or fifteen, they are all put in irons; in moſt ſhips, two and two together. And frequently, they are not thus confined, as they might, moſt conveniently, ſtand or move, the right hand and foot of one to the left of the other; but acroſs, that

that is, the hand and foot of each on the ſame ſide, whether right or left, are fettered together: ſo that they cannot move, either hand or foot, but with great caution, and with perfect conſent. Thus they muſt ſit, walk and lie, for many months, (ſometimes for nine or ten,) without any mitigation or relief, unleſs they are ſick.

In the night they are confined below, in the day-time (if the weather be fine) they are upon deck; and as they are brought up, by pairs, a chain is put through a ring upon their irons, and this is likewiſe locked down to the ring-bolts, which are faſtened at certain intervals upon the deck. Theſe, and other precautions, are no more than neceſſary; eſpecially, as while the number of Slaves increaſes, that of the people, who are to guard them, is diminiſhed, by ſickneſs or death, or by being abſent in the boats: ſo that, ſometimes, not ten men can be muſtered, to watch, night and day, over two hundred, beſides having all the other buſineſs of the ſhip to attend.

That theſe precautions are ſo often effectual, is much more to be wondered at, than that they ſometimes fail. One unguarded hour, or minute, is ſufficient to give the Slaves the oppor-

opportunity they are always waiting for. An attempt to riſe upon the ſhip's company, brings on inſtantaneous and horrid war; for, when they are once in motion, they are deſperate; and where they do not conquer, they are ſeldom quelled without much miſchief and blood-ſhed, on both ſides.

Sometimes, when the Slaves are ripe for an inſurrection, one of them will impeach the affair; and then neceſſity, and the ſtate policy, of theſe ſmall, but moſt abſolute governments, enforce maxims directly contrary to the nature of things. The traitor to the cauſe of liberty is careſſed, rewarded, and deemed an honeſt fellow. The patriots, who formed and animated the plan, if they can be found out, muſt be treated as villains, and puniſhed, to intimidate the reſt. Theſe puniſhments, in their nature and degree, depend upon the ſovereign will of the Captain. Some are content with inflicting ſuch moderate puniſhment, as may ſuffice for an example. But unlimited power, inſtigated by revenge, and where the heart, by a long familiarity with the ſufferings of Slaves, is become callous, and inſenſible to the pleadings of humanity, is terrible.

I have

I have ſeen them ſentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their miſery, and hardly a ſign of life has remained. I have ſeen them agonizing for hours, I believe for days together, under the torture of the thumb-ſcrews; a dreadful engine, which, if the ſcrew be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give intolerable anguiſh. There have been inſtances in which cruelty has proceeded ſtill further; but, as I hope they are few, and I can mention but one, from my own knowledge, I ſhall but mention it.

I have often heard a Captain, who has been long ſince dead, boaſt of his conduct in a former voyage, when his Slaves attempted to riſe upon him. After he had ſuppreſſed the inſurrection, he ſat in judgment upon the inſurgents; and not only, in cold blood, adjudged ſeveral of them, I know not how many, to die, but ſtudied, with no ſmall attention, how to make death as excruciating to them as poſſible. For my reader's ſake, I ſuppreſs the recital of particulars.

Surely, it muſt be allowed, that they who are long converſant with ſuch ſcenes as theſe, are liable to imbibe a ſpirit of ferociouſneſs, and ſavage inſenſibility, of which human na-

ture, depraved as it is, is not, ordinarily, capable. If theſe things be true, the reader will admit the poſſibility of a fact, that was in current report, when I was upon the coaſt, and the truth of which, though I cannot now authenticate it, I have no reaſon to doubt.

A Mate of a ſhip, in a long boat, purchaſed a young woman, with a fine child, of about a year old, in her arms. In the night, the child cried much, and diſturbed his ſleep. He roſe up in great anger, and ſwore, that if the child did not ceaſe making ſuch a noiſe, he would preſently ſilence it. The child continued to cry. At length he roſe up a ſecond time, tore the child from the mother, and threw it into the ſea. The child was ſoon ſilenced indeed, but it was not ſo eaſy to pacify the woman: ſhe was too valuable to be thrown overboard, and he was obliged to bear the ſound of her lamentations, till he could put her on board his ſhip.

I am perſuaded, that every tender mother, who feaſts her eyes and her mind, when ſhe contemplates the infant in her arms, will commiſerate the poor Africans.—But why do I ſpeak of one child, when we have heard and read a melancholy ſtory, too notoriouſly true to admit of contradiction, of more than a hundred

hundred grown ſlaves, thrown into the ſea, at one time, from on board a ſhip, when freſh water was ſcarce; to fix the loſs upon the Underwriters, which otherwiſe, had they died on board, muſt have fallen upon the Owners of the veſſel*. Theſe inſtances are ſpecimens of the ſpirit produced, by the African Trade, in men, who, once, were no more deſtitute of the milk of human kindneſs, than ourſelves.

Hitherto, I have conſidered the condition of the Men Slaves only. From the Women, there is no danger of inſurrection, and they are carefully kept from the men; I mean, from the Black men. But——In what I have to offer, on this head, I am far from including every ſhip. I ſpeak not of what is univerſally, but of what is too commonly, and, I am afraid, too generally prevalent.

I have already obſerved, that the Captain of an African ſhip, while upon the coaſt, is abſolute in his command; and if he be humane, vigilant, and determined, he has it in his power to protect the miſerable; for ſcarcely any thing can be done, on board the ſhip,

* There was a trial upon the caſe alluded to at Guildhall. My information was only from the public papers. If, as I have heard, the affair was miſ-ſtated, I ſhall be ſorry to have given any countenance to a falſe report.

without his permiſſion, or connivance. But this power is, too ſeldom, exerted in favour of the poor Women Slaves.

When we hear of a town taken by ſtorm, and given up to the ravages of an enraged and licentious army, of wild and unprincipled Coſſacks, perhaps no part of the diſtreſs affects a feeling mind more, than the treatment to which the Women are expoſed. But the enormities frequently committed, in an African ſhip, though equally flagrant, are little known *here*, and are conſidered, *there*, only as matters of courſe. When the Women and Girls are taken on board a ſhip, naked, trembling, terrified, perhaps almoſt exhauſted with cold, fatigue and hunger, they are often expoſed to the wanton rudeneſs of white Savages. The poor creatures cannot underſtand the language they hear, but the looks and manner of the ſpeakers, are ſufficiently intelligible. In imagination, the prey is divided, upon the ſpot, and only reſerved till opportunity offers. Where reſiſtance, or refuſal, would be utterly in vain, even the ſollicitation of conſent is ſeldom thought of. But I forbear.—This is not a ſubject for declamation. Facts like theſe, ſo certain, and ſo numerous, ſpeak for themſelves. Surely, if the advocates for the

the Slave Trade attempt to plead for it, before the Wives and Daughters of our happy land, or before thoſe who have Wives or Daughters of their own, they muſt loſe their cauſe.

Perhaps ſome hard-hearted pleader may ſuggeſt, that ſuch treatment would indeed be cruel, in Europe; but the African Women are Negroes, Savages, who have no idea of the nicer ſenſation, which obtain among civilized people. I dare contradict them in the ſtrongeſt terms. I have lived long, and converſed much, amongſt theſe ſuppoſed Savages. I have often ſlept in their towns, in a houſe filled with goods for trade, with no perſon in the houſe but myſelf, and with no other door than a mat; in that ſecurity, which no man in his ſenſes would expect, in this civilized nation, eſpecially in this metropolis, without the precaution of having ſtrong doors, ſtrongly locked and bolted. And with regard to the women, in Sherbro, where I was moſt acquainted, I have ſeen many inſtances of modeſty, and even delicacy, which would not diſgrace an Engliſh woman. Yet, ſuch is the treatment which I have known permitted, if not encouraged, in many of our ſhips—they have been abandoned, without reſtraint,

reſtraint, to the lawleſs will of the firſt comer.

Accuſtomed thus to deſpiſe, inſult, and injure the Slaves on board, it may be expected that the conduct of many of our people to the Natives, with whom they trade, is, as far as circumſtances admit, very ſimilar; and it is ſo. They are conſidered as a people to be robbed and ſpoiled, with impunity. Every art is employed to deceive, and wrong them. And he who has moſt addreſs, in this way, has moſt to boaſt of.

Not an article, that is capable of diminution or adulteration, is delivered genuine, or entire. The ſpirits are lowered by water. Falſe heads are put into the kegs that contain the gunpowder; ſo that, though the keg appears large, there is no more powder in it, than in a much ſmaller. The linen and cotton cloths are opened, and two or three yards, according to the length of the piece, cut off, not from the end, but out of the middle, where it is not ſo readily noticed.

The Natives are cheated, in the number, weight, meaſure, or quality, of what they purchaſe,

purchaſe, in every poſſible way. And, by habit and emulation, a marvellous dexterity is acquired in theſe practices. And thus the Natives, in their turn, in proportion to their commerce with the Europeans, and (I am ſorry to add) particularly with the Engliſh, become jealous, inſidious and revengeful.

They know with whom they deal, and are accordingly prepared;—though they can truſt ſome ſhips and boats, which have treated them with punctuality, and may be truſted by them. A quarrel, ſometimes, furniſhes pretext for detaining, and carrying away, one or more of the Natives, which is retaliated, if practicable, upon the next boat that comes to the place, from the ſame port. For ſo far their vindictive temper is reſtrained by their ideas of juſtice, that they will not, often, revenge an injury received from a Liverpool ſhip, upon one belonging to Briſtol or London.

They will, uſually, wait with patience, the arrival of one, which they ſuppoſe, by her ſailing from the ſame place, has ſome connection with that which uſed them ill; and they are ſo quick at diſtinguiſhing our little local differences of language, and cuſtoms in a ſhip, that before they have been in a ſhip five minutes,

nutes, and often before they come on board, they know, with certainty, whether ſhe be from Briſtol, Liverpool, or London.

Retaliation on their parts, furniſhes a plea for reprizal on ours. Thus, in one place or another, trade is often ſuſpended, all intercourſe cut off, and things are in a ſtate of war; till neceſſity, either on the ſhip's part, or on theirs, produces overtures of peace, and dictates the price, which the offending party muſt pay for it. But it is a warlike peace. We trade under arms; and they are furniſhed with long knives.

For, with a few exceptions, the Engliſh and the Africans, reciprocally, conſider each other as conſummate villains, who are always watching opportunities to do miſchief. In ſhort, we have, I fear too deſervedly, a very unfavourable character upon the Coaſt. When I have charged a Black with unfairneſs and diſhoneſty, he has anſwered, if able to clear himſelf, with an air of diſdain, "What! do "you think I am a White Man?"

Such is the nature, ſuch are the concomitants, of the Slave Trade; and ſuch is the ſchool in which many thouſands of our Seamen

are brought up. Can we then wonder at that impatience of ſubordination, and that diſpoſition to mutiny, amongſt them, which has been, of late, ſo loudly complained of, and ſo ſeverely felt? Will not ſound policy ſuggeſt the neceſſity of ſome expedient here? Or can ſound policy ſuggeſt any, effectual, expedient, but the total ſuppreſſion of a Trade, which, like a poiſonous root, diffuſes its malignity into every branch?

The effects which our trade has upon the Blacks, thoſe eſpecially who come under our power, may be conſidered under three heads, —How they are acquired? The mortality they are ſubject to? and, How thoſe who ſurvive are diſpoſed of?

I confine my remarks on the firſt head to the Windward Coaſt, and can ſpeak moſt confidently of the trade in Sherbro, where I lived. I own, however, that I queſtion, if any part of the Windward Coaſt is equal to Sherbro, in point of regularity and government. They have no men of great power or property among them; as I am told there are upon the Gold Coaſt, at Whidah and Benin. The Sherbro people live much in the patriarchal way. An old man uſually preſides in each

town, whoſe authority depends more on his years, than on his poſſeſſions: and He, who is called the King, is not eaſily diſtinguiſhed, either by ſtate or wealth, from the reſt. But the different diſtricts, which ſeem to be, in many reſpects, independent of each other, are incorporated, and united, by means of an inſtitution which pervades them all, and is called The *Purrow*. The perſons of this order, who are very numerous, ſeem, very much, to reſemble the Druids, who once preſided in our iſland.

The *Purrow* has both the legiſlative and executive authority, and, under their ſanction, there is a police exerciſed, which is by no means contemptible. Every thing belonging to the *Purrow* is myſterious and ſevere, but, upon the whole, it has very good effects; and as any man, whether bond or free, who will ſubmit to be initiated into their myſteries, may be admitted of the Order, it is a kind of Common-wealth. And, perhaps, few people enjoy more, ſimple, political freedom, than the inhabitants of Sherbro, belonging to the *Purrow*, (who are not ſlaves,) further than they are bound by their own inſtitutions. Private property is tolerably well ſecured, and violence is much ſuppreſſed.

The

The ſtate of Slavery, among theſe wild barbarous people, as we eſteem them, is much milder than in our colonies. For as, on the one hand, they have no land in high cultivation, like our Weſt-India plantations, and therefore no call for that exceſſive, unintermitted labour, which exhauſts our Slaves; ſo, on the other hand, no man is permitted to draw blood, even from a Slave. If he does, he is liable to a ſtrict inquiſition; for the *Purrow* laws will not allow a private individual to ſhed blood. A man may ſell his ſlave, if he pleaſes; but he may not wantonly abuſe him. The laws likewiſe puniſh ſome ſpecies of theft, with ſlavery; and in caſes of adultery, which are very common, as polygamy is the cuſtom of the country, both the woman, and the man who offends with her, are liable to be ſold for Slaves, unleſs they can ſatisfy the huſband, or unleſs they are redeemed by their friends.

Among theſe unenlightened Blacks, it is a general maxim, that if a man ſteals, or breaks a moveable, as a muſket, for inſtance, the offence may be nearly compenſated, by putting another muſket in its place; but offences, which cannot be repaired in kind, as adultery, admit of no ſatisfaction, till the injured perſon

declares, that He is ſatisfied. So that, if a rich man ſeduces the wife of a poor man, he has it in his power to change places with him; for he may ſend for every article in his houſe, one by one, till he ſays, "I have enough." The only alternative, is perſonal ſlavery.

I ſuppoſe, bribery and influence may have their effects in Guinea, as they have in ſome other countries; but their laws, in the main, are wiſe and good, and, upon the whole, they have conſiderable operation; and therefore, I believe, many of the Slaves purchaſed in Sherbro, and probably upon the whole Windward Coaſt, are convicts, who have forfeited their liberty, by breaking the laws of their country.

But, I apprehend, that the neighbourhood of our ſhips, and the deſire of our goods, are motives, which often puſh the rigor of the laws to an extreme, which would not be exacted, if they were left to themſelves.

But Slaves are the ſtaple article of the traffic; and though a conſiderable number may have been born near the ſea, I believe the bulk of them are brought from far. I have reaſon to think, that ſome travel more than a thouſand miles,

miles, before they reach the ſea coaſt. Whether there may be convicts among theſe likewiſe, or what proportion they may bear to thoſe who are taken priſoners in war, it is impoſſible to know.

I judge, the principal ſource of the Slave Trade, is, the wars which prevail among the Natives. Sometimes, theſe wars break out between thoſe who live near the ſea. The Engliſh, and other Europeans, have been charged with fomenting them; I believe (ſo far as concerns the Windward Coaſt) unjuſtly. That ſome would do it, if they could, I doubt not; but I do not think they can have opportunity. Nor is it needful they ſhould interfere. Thouſands, in our own country, wiſh for war, becauſe they fatten upon its ſpoils.

Human nature is much the ſame in every place, and few people will be willing to allow, that the *Negroes* in Africa are better than themſelves. Suppoſing, therefore, they wiſh for European goods, may not they wiſh to purchaſe them from a ſhip juſt arrived? Of courſe, they muſt wiſh for Slaves to go to market with; and if they have not Slaves, and think themſelves ſtrong enough to invade

their

their neighbours, they will probably wiſh for war.—And if once they wiſh for it, how eaſy is it to find, or make, pretexts for breaking an inconvenient peace; or (after the example of greater heroes, of Chriſtian name) to make depredations, without condeſcending to aſſign any reaſons.

I verily believe, that the far greater part of the wars, in Africa, would ceaſe; if the Europeans would ceaſe to tempt them, by offering goods for Slaves. And though they do not bring legions into the field, their wars are bloody. I believe, the captives reſerved for ſale, are fewer than the ſlain.

I have not ſufficient data to warrant calculation, but, I ſuppoſe, not leſs than one hundred thouſand Slaves are exported, annually, from all parts of Africa, and that more than one half, of theſe, are exported in Engliſh bottoms.

If but an equal number are killed in war, and if many of theſe wars are kindled by the incentive of ſelling their priſoners; what an annual accumulation of blood muſt there be, crying againſt the nations of Europe concerned in this trade, and particularly againſt our own!

I have, often, been gravely told, as a proof that the Africans, however hardly treated, deſerve but little compaſſion, that they are a people ſo deſtitute of natural affection, that it is common, among them, for parents to ſell their children, and children their parents. And, I think, a charge, of this kind, is brought againſt them, by the reſpectable author of *Spectacle de la Nature.* But he muſt have been miſinformed. I never heard of one inſtance of either, while I uſed the Coaſt.

One article more, upon this head, is Kidnapping, or ſtealing free people. Some people ſuppoſe, that the Ship Trade is rather the ſtealing, than the buying of Slaves. But there is enough to lay to the charge of the ſhips, without accuſing them falſely. The ſlaves, in general, are bought, and paid for. Sometimes, when goods are lent, or truſted on ſhore, the trader voluntarily leaves a free perſon, perhaps his own ſon, as a hoſtage, or pawn, for the payment; and, in caſe of default, the hoſtage is carried off, and ſold; which, however hard upon him, being in conſequence of a free ſtipulation, cannot be deemed unfair. There have been inſtances of unprincipled Captains, who, at the cloſe of what they ſuppoſed their laſt voyage, and when

when they had no intention of reviſiting the Coaſt, have detained, and carried away, free people with them; and left the next ſhip, that ſhould come from the ſame port, to riſk the conſequences. But theſe actions, I hope, and believe, are not common.

With regard to the Natives, to ſteal a free man or woman, and to ſell them on board a ſhip, would, I think, be a more difficult, and more dangerous attempt, in Sherbro, than in London. But I have no doubt, that the traders who come, from the interior parts of Africa, at a great diſtance, find opportunity, in the courſe of their journey, to pick up ſtragglers, whom they may meet in their way. This branch of oppreſſion, and robbery, would likewiſe fail, if the temptation to it were removed.

I have, to the beſt of my knowledge, pointed out the principal ſources, of that immenſe ſupply of Slaves, which furniſhes ſo large an exportation every year. If all that are taken on board the ſhips, were to ſurvive the voyage, and be landed in good order, poſſibly the Engliſh, French, and Dutch iſlands, and colonies, would be ſoon overſtocked, and fewer ſhips would ſail to the Coaſt. But a larger

large abatement muſt be made for mortality. —After what I have already ſaid of their treatment, I ſhall now, that I am again to conſider them on board the ſhips, confine myſelf to this point.

In the Portugueſe ſhips, which trade from Braſil to the Gold Coaſt and Angola, I believe, a heavy mortality is not frequent. The Slaves have room, they are not put in irons, (I ſpeak from information only,) and are humanely treated.

With our ſhips, the great object is, to be full. When the ſhip is there, it is thought deſirable, ſhe ſhould take as many as poſſible. The cargo of a veſſel of a hundred tons, or little more, is calculated to purchaſe from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and fifty Slaves. Their lodging-rooms below the deck, which are three, (for the men, the boys, and the women,) beſides a place for the ſick, are ſometimes more than five feet high, and ſometimes leſs; and this height is divided towards the middle, for the Slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each ſide of the ſhip, cloſe to each other, like books upon a ſhelf. I have known them ſo cloſe,

that the ſhelf would not, eaſily, contain one more.

And I have known a white man ſent down, among the men, to lay them in theſe rows to the greateſt advantage, ſo that as little ſpace as poſſible might be loſt. Let it be obſerved, that the poor creatures, thus cramped for want of room, are likewiſe in irons, for the moſt part both hands and feet, and two together, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move, to attempt either to riſe or to lie down, without hurting themſelves, or each other. Nor is the motion of the ſhip, eſpecially her heeling, or ſtoop on one ſide, when under ſail, to be omitted; for this, as they lie athwart, or acroſs the ſhip, adds to the uncomfortableneſs of their lodging, eſpecially to thoſe who lie on the leeward, or leaning, ſide of the veſſel.

Dire is the toſſing, deep the groans.——

The heat and the ſmell of theſe rooms, when the weather will not admit of the Slaves being brought upon deck, and of having their rooms cleaned every day, would be, almoſt, inſupportable, to a perſon not accuſ-

tomed to them. If the Slaves and their rooms can be conſtantly aired, and they are not detained too long on board, perhaps there are not many die; but the contrary is often their lot. They are kept down, by the weather, to breathe a hot and corrupted air, ſometimes for a week: this, added to the galling of their irons, and the deſpondency which ſeizes their ſpirits, when thus confined, ſoon becomes fatal. And every morning, perhaps, more inſtances than one are found, of the living and the dead, like the Captives of Mezentius, faſtened together.

Epidemical fevers and fluxes, which fill the ſhip with noiſome and noxious effluvia, often break out, infect the Seamen likewiſe, and the Oppreſſors, and the Oppreſſed, fall by the ſame ſtroke. I believe, nearly one half of the Slaves on board, have, ſometimes, died; and that the loſs of a third part, in theſe circumſtances, is not unuſual. The ſhip, in which I was Mate, left the Coaſt with Two Hundred and Eighteen Slaves on board; and though we were not much affected by epidemical diſorders, I find, by my journal of that voyage, (now before me,) that we buried Sixty-two on our paſſage to South-Carolina,

excluſive of thoſe which died before we left the Coaſt, of which I have no account.

I believe, upon an average between the more healthy, and the more ſickly voyages, and including all contingencies, One Fourth of the whole purchaſe may be allotted to the article of Mortality. That is, if the Engliſh ſhips purchaſe *Sixty Thouſand* Slaves annually, upon the whole extent of the Coaſt, the annual loſs of lives cannot be much leſs than *Fifteen Thouſand.*

I am now to ſpeak of the ſurvivors.—When the ſhips make the land, (uſually the Weſt-India iſlands,) and have their port in view, after having been four, five, ſix weeks, or a longer time, at ſea, (which depends much upon the time that paſſes before they can get into the permanent Trade Winds, which blow from the North-Eaſt and Eaſt acroſs the Atlantic,) then, and not before, they venture to releaſe the Men Slaves from their irons. And then, the ſight of the land, and their freedom from long and painful confinement, uſually excite in them a degree of alacrity, and a tranſient feeling of joy——

The priſoner leaps to loſe his chains.

But,

But, this joy is ſhort-lived indeed. The condition of the unhappy Slaves is in a continual progreſs from bad to worſe. Their caſe is truly pitiable, from the moment they are in a ſtate of ſlavery, in their own country; but it may be deemed a ſtate of eaſe and liberty, compared with their ſituation on board our ſhips.

Yet, perhaps, they would wiſh to ſpend the remainder of their days on ſhip-board, could they know, before-hand, the nature of the ſervitude which awaits them, on ſhore; and that the dreadful hardſhips and ſufferings they have already endured, would, to the moſt of them, only terminate in exceſſive toil, hunger, and the excruciating tortures of the cart-whip, inflicted at the caprice of an unfeeling Overſeer, proud of the power allowed him of puniſhing whom, and when, and how he pleaſes.

I hope the Slaves, in our iſlands, are better treated now, than they were, at the time when I was in the trade. And even then, I know, there were Slaves, who, under the care and protection of humane maſters, were, comparatively, happy. But I ſaw and heard enough

enough to ſatisfy me, that their condition, in general, was wretched to the extreme. However, my ſtay in Antigua and St. Chriſtopher's (the only iſlands I viſited) was too ſhort, to qualify me for ſaying much, from my own certain knowledge, upon this painful ſubject. Nor is it needful:—Enough has been offered by ſeveral reſpectable writers, who have had opportunity of collecting ſurer, and fuller information.

One thing I cannot omit, which was told me by the Gentleman to whom my ſhip was conſigned, at Antigua, in the year 1751, and who was, himſelf, a Planter. He ſaid, that calculations had been made, with all poſſible exactneſs, to determine which was the preferable, that is, the more ſaving method of managing Slaves:——

"Whether, to appoint them moderate "work, plenty of proviſion, and ſuch "treatment, as might enable them to "protract their lives to old age?" Or,

"By rigorouſly ſtraining their ſtrength to "the utmoſt, with little relaxation, "hard fare, and hard uſage, to wear "them out before they became uſeleſs,

"and

" and unable to do ſervice; and then,
" to buy new ones, to fill up their
" places?"

He farther ſaid, that theſe ſkilful calculators had determined in favour of the latter mode, as much the cheaper; and that he could mention ſeveral eſtates, in the iſland of Antigua, on which, it was ſeldom known, that a Slave had lived above nine years.—— *Ex pede Herculem!*

When the Slaves are landed for ſale, (for in the Leeward Iſlands they are uſually ſold on ſhore,) it may happen, that after a long ſeparation in different parts of the ſhip, when they are brought together in one place, ſome, who are nearly related, may recognize each other. If, upon ſuch a meeting, pleaſure ſhould be felt, it can be but momentary. The ſale diſperſes them wide, to different parts of the iſland, or to different iſlands. Huſbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Brothers and Siſters, muſt ſuddenly part again, probably to meet no more.

After a careful peruſal of what I have written, weighing every paragraph diſtinctly, I can

I can find nothing to retract. As it is not eaſy to write altogether with coolneſs, upon this buſineſs, and eſpecially not eaſy to me, who have formerly been ſo deeply engaged in it; I have been jealous, leſt the warmth of imagination might have inſenſibly ſeduced me, to aggravate and overcharge ſome of the horrid features, which I have attempted to delineate, of the African Trade. But, upon a ſtrict review, I am ſatisfied.

I have apprized the reader, that I write from memory, after an interval of more than thirty years. But at the ſame time, I believe, many things which I ſaw, heard and felt, upon the Coaſt of Africa, are ſo deeply engraven in my memory, that I can hardly forget, or greatly miſtake them, while I am capable of remembering any thing. I am certainly not guilty of wilful miſrepreſentation. And, upon the whole, I dare appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts, in whoſe preſence I write, and before whom I, and my readers, muſt all ſhortly appear, that (with the reſtrictions and exceptions I have made) I have advanced nothing, but what, to the beſt of my judgment and conſcience, is true.

I have

I have likewiſe written without ſollicitation, and ſimply from the motive I have already aſſigned; a conviction, that the ſhare I have formerly had in the trade, binds me, in conſcience, to throw what light I am able upon the ſubject, now it is likely to become a point of Parliamentary inveſtigation.

No one can have leſs intereſt in it, than I have at preſent, further than as I am intereſted by the feelings of humanity, and a regard for the honor, and welfare of my country.

Though unwilling to give offence to a ſingle perſon: in ſuch a cauſe, I ought not to be afraid of offending many, by declaring the truth. If, indeed, there can be many, whom even intereſt can prevail upon to contradict the common ſenſe of mankind, by pleading for a commerce, ſo iniquitous, ſo cruel, ſo oppreſſive, ſo deſtructive, as the African Slave Trade!

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